



City of Grand Rapids, Michigan

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

ROSALYNN C. BLISS
MAYOR

December 4, 2018

The Honorable Representative James Lower, Chair and
Honorable Members of the House Local Government Committee
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7514

Dear Representative Lower,

I am writing to express opposition to SB 1188 and the corresponding legislation that would prohibit local entities from adopting or enforcing tree and vegetation removal ordinances and more importantly would prohibit mitigation for the removal of vegetation. This legislation was introduced in response to a single dispute in one community and I urge you to consider that all of the municipalities that are responsibly governing should not be punished for one community's action. The City of Grand Rapids opposes this legislation due to a number of unintended consequences this bill will create for economic development interests; business interests; residents; and local, county and state authorities charged with the responsibility for stormwater management and water quality.

Specifically, municipalities are required to comply with EPA and DEQ water quality and discharge requirements and be good stewards of public resources while balancing that with taxpayer's interests and public safety. Therefore, current practices for stormwater, soil, erosion and sedimentation control rely on preservation of existing vegetation or the planting of new vegetation for stormwater uptake by the plants. This is a cost-effective way for developers to use trees and vegetation to manage stormwater as "green infrastructure" rather than installing expensive pipes and storage facilities or "gray infrastructure." In addition, failure to effectively manage stormwater creates down-stream effects to taxpayers and property owners with flash flooding, erosion, and degraded water quality.

This legislation will result in increased costs for both the public and private sectors and reduce our competitiveness. If a local community cannot enforce the preservation and protection of green infrastructure, then gray infrastructure will be required which will ultimately cost developers more money in the development process and act as a deterrent to economic revitalization and development.

While there were changes made before the bill passed the Senate that addressed some of our concerns, we remain opposed as it will impair development in our City and ultimately our competitiveness. We have drafted an amendment that addresses the stormwater management issue. This amendment does not solve all of our concerns, but it does provide a solution to our most pressing problem. As you deliberate this legislation, please understand our opposition to this bill is motivated by our desire to protect public safety and quality of life and continue to encourage economic investment and development in our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rosalynn Bliss".

Rosalynn Bliss